

## Head-to-Toe Training on PPE Maintenance

When most trainers think about PPE, they usually focus on proper selection and use. But care and maintenance of PPE is another important training issue--one that all too easily can fall through the cracks.

**Heads up on hard hat care.** Employees who use head protection should be trained to:

- Clean hard hats regularly with warm water and soap, and allow to air dry.
- Store head protection out of the sun, away from extreme temperatures, and in a safe place (like a locker) where it can't get knocked around and damaged.
- Check the headband to make sure that it isn't stretched or worn and that the hat fits comfortably on the head.
- Replace a hard hat if it is cracked, dented, or has taken a heavy blow.

**Keep an eye on safety eyewear maintenance.** Make sure workers take good care of their eye protection. For example, train employees to:

- Clean safety glasses and goggles regularly with mild soap and water.
- Wash lenses with water before wiping to prevent scratching. (If employees don't have access to clean water, tell them to blow dust and grit from lenses before wiping.)
- Store eye protection preferably in a clean dust-proof case or in a safe place such as the top shelf of a locker where it won't get scratched or otherwise damaged.
- Replace safety glasses if frames are bent, and replace goggles if headbands are loose, twisted, knotted, or worn. Replace any kind of eye protection if lenses are scratched or pitted and impair vision.

**Now hear this! Take good care of hearing protection!** Even hearing protection needs proper maintenance to keep it in good, safe condition. That means employees need to:

- Wipe earmuffs with a damp cloth after each use, store them in a safe place, and replace cushions when they lose their resilience.
- Wash reusable earplugs every day, store them in a clean case, and replace if plugs are hard or discolored.
- Wipe canal caps (headband plugs) with a damp cloth after each use, store them in a safe place so the headband won't get bent or twisted, and replace if the band is damaged and no longer fits comfortably.

**Breathe easy with well-maintained respirators.** After employees use respirators they should:

- Clean and disinfect them according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Check for holes, cracks, deterioration, and any other problems that could interfere with the effectiveness of protection.
- Store in a safe location, protected from dust, light, heat, cold, moisture, and chemicals.
- Place the respirator so that rubber and plastic parts are in a normal position and hold their shape.

**Lend a hand to keep gloves in good shape.**

Be sure to tell workers whether particular gloves are reusable or not and, if reusable, how long they can safely be worn before they should be replaced. Also instruct them to:

- Keep gloves clean and dry.
- Have a backup pair in case gloves get wet (or must be washed) and need to dry.
- Check for holes, cracks, and other damage before each use.
- Replace worn or damaged gloves right away.

#### **Why It Matters...**

- PPE is sometimes the only barrier between employees and workplace hazards that can injure, maim, or kill.
- PPE that isn't properly maintained is likely to become worn or damaged.
- PPE that isn't in good condition can't properly protect employees from hazards.

**Put your best foot forward for foot protection.** It's easy to forget about safety shoes and other work footwear as long as your feet don't hurt. But to adequately protect employees against foot hazards, shoes need proper care and maintenance just like any other kind of PPE. To get the best protection from work shoes, employees should:

- Wipe wet or soiled shoes with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- Air out work shoes after work, and check regularly for signs of damage or wear.
- Have worn or damaged shoes repaired, or replace them.
- Change socks during the lunch break to keep feet and shoes dry if feet sweat a lot.